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## **LINDA HALL LIBRARY IN THE 1990S: FACING A NEW ERA**

**by PAUL PETERSON**

Linda Hall Library occupies a unique place among libraries in that it is an independent research library of science and technology, privately endowed and open to the public. The library has been serving the scientific and technical research community since 1946, when it opened in the former mansion of the late Herbert and Linda Hall of Kansas City, Missouri. Herbert Hall was a Kansas City grain merchant who died in 1941. His wife Linda died in 1938; their wills jointly established Linda Hall Library on the 14-acre site of their home in midtown Kansas City, Missouri.

The Halls left \$6,000,000 to establish a "free public library for the use of the people of Kansas City and the public generally." The five-man board of trustees named in the wills took the advice of several independent consultants from the library community and decided that the library would be one of science and technology. They hired Joseph C. Shipman as the first director in 1945, and the library opened its doors in 1946.

Since then the library has grown rapidly. In late 1946 it bought virtually the entire collection of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, which the Academy wished to divest owing to its duplication in the Boston area. Two boxcars full of retrospective scientific journals and monographs came to Kansas City and were combined with a vigorous acquisitions plan

to form the backbone of one of the nation's widest and deepest research collections of science and technology.

### **THE COLLECTIONS**

Linda Hall Library collects in all areas of science and technology, excluding clinical medicine. Research materials in almost 40 languages are owned. The collection is aimed at filling the information needs of working researchers in industry, academia, government--wherever sci-tech materials are needed worldwide.

The library owns over 600,000 volumes, including more than 200,000 research monographs. The extensive journal collection, vital to scientific research, contains over 16,500 current titles and over 38,000 titles in all. There are several other forms of research materials, including 1,135,000 technical reports and government publications, of which 68,000 are maps. The library owns more than 33,000 conference proceedings, and over 100,000 engineering standards and specifications of the U.S. government and of private standards agencies. Linda Hall Library is also a U.S. Patent Depository Library and thus offers patent specifications and searching tools for anyone desiring patent research information.

The library has almost 600 exchange partners in 52 countries. These exchange relationships account for over 3,000

currently received journal titles and a sizable number of research monographs. Holdings are especially strong in Eastern European, Soviet, Japanese and Chinese sci-tech publications. The library does not collect translations as a rule, concentrating instead on original language materials.

Its History of Science Collection is a valuable resource in almost all fields of scientific experience. It is especially strong in the history of astronomy, geology, and the physical sciences. Holdings date from the 15th century to the present.

#### STAFF AND FACILITIES

Linda Hall has a relatively small staff for a research library, numbering 61 FTE, of whom 19 are professional librarians. The library now occupies two buildings with 180,000 square feet of space. Operating out of the Hall residence in 1946, the library quickly outgrew that space, and in 1956 the neo-Georgian main building of 90,000 square feet was opened. In 1964, further expansion was effected by razing the old

house and constructing the West Wing of 60,000 square feet. In 1977 the Main Reading Room was doubled in space by a 30,000-square-foot addition.

The library sits in the middle of a 14-acre site in midtown Kansas City's cultural center. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Midwest Research Institute, Rockhurst College, Missouri Repertory Theater, and the Kansas City Art Institute are all nearby; the University of Missouri-Kansas City is adjacent to Linda Hall, although entirely unaffiliated with the library. The library grounds are an urban arboretum with over 500 trees of 165 species, with beds of tree peonies, old-fashioned roses, and viburnums, all maintained as an extension of the library's educational and cultural mission.

A five-man board of trustees is the governing body of the library. Another unique feature of Linda Hall Library is that it has been supported by the income from its original endowment, with the exception of a few modest gifts. This endowment has been invested wisely; the library has its own



full-time investment officer. However, even a sound and stable investment history cannot guarantee sufficient funding at a time when serials prices, for example, rise at the egregious rate of 15-20 percent per year. A discussion of the implications of this problem is found later in this article.

### SERVICES AND ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS

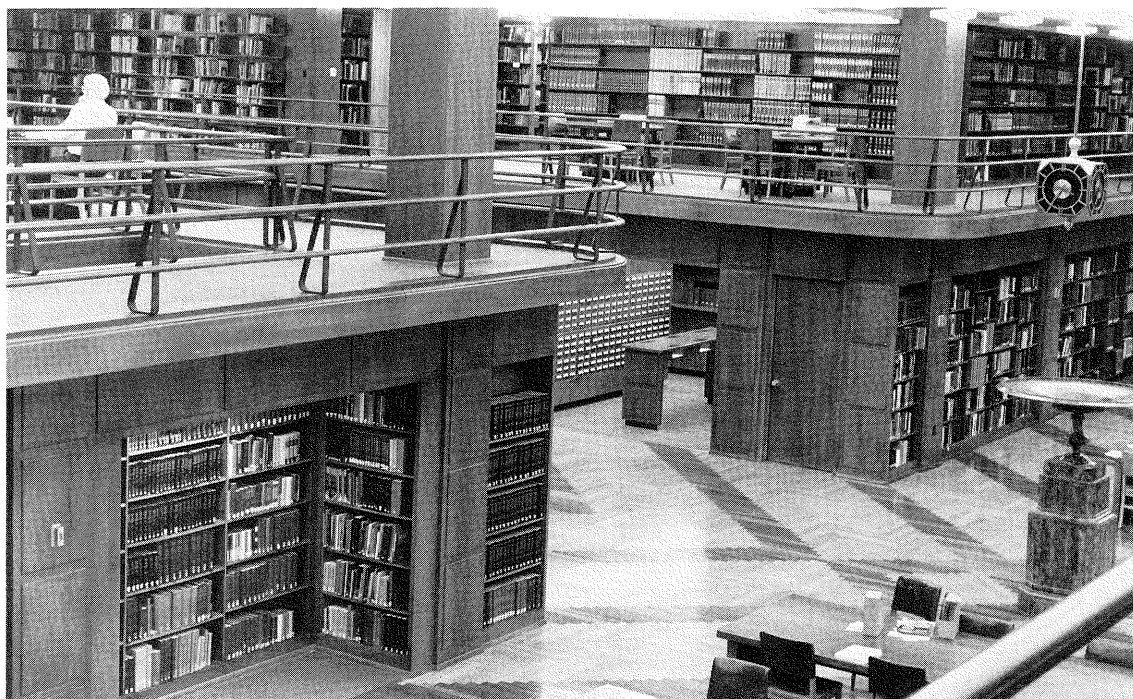
The library has been a member of OCLC for a decade and thus provides quick access to materials acquired since then. However, only a few serial titles have been added to OCLC. For comprehensive access to the library's 38,000 serials, users should consult Serials Holdings in the Linda Hall Library, the 800-page volume that contains complete holdings descriptions of all serial titles in the library. The 1989 edition is still available; those interested in obtaining a copy should contact the Serials Division.

The 1989 Serials Holding List exists in machine-readable form. Discussions with

area research libraries, with OCLC, and with other parties may very well lead to its becoming available in online or other forms in the next few years.

As a reference and research library, Linda Hall does not circulate its materials. However, standard interlibrary loan and photocopy procedures are available, subject to close attention to copyright regulations. ILL and photocopy access exists in a number of media: standard ALA mailed forms, telephone (816-363-4600, ext. 52), and OCLC's ILL subsystem. Rates for these services are available from the Interlibrary Loans Division. At this time, the library is considering offering telefax access for ILL requests, and possibly for transmission of photocopies. An announcement will be made in this journal should that take effect.

As a function of the depth of its collections, its policy of non-circulation, its closed stacks, and its organization, the library has a very high fill rate for requests for its materials. This fill rate is around 80



percent for all requests; when those requests that are out-of-scope (political science, literature, etc.) are not considered, the fill rate is around 90 percent.

There are two reference librarians on duty at all times the library is open. The Reference Desk handles ready-reference and in-depth questions, in-house journal and document requests, bibliographic instruction, patent assistance, and other public services.

In addition to the published Serials Holding List, the library has available a number of exhibition catalogs, general informational brochures, and "Arbor Scientiae," a description and map of all of the trees and perennial beds on the grounds.

#### THE FUTURE; CHANGES ARE IMMINENT

"At Linda Hall Library, the past is not prologue." Louis E. Martin, the library's fourth director, is fond of saying this as a preface to discussing the library's future. The climate for research libraries has changed so much in the past few years that the library now must grapple with the realization that many old ways of doing things simply don't apply any more.

Item: Prices of serials, research monographs, conference proceedings--just about any kind of publication--have risen greatly in the past decade. The problem is worse for a library with a concentration in science and technology, and substantial holdings in publications from foreign countries.

For the first time, Linda Hall Library cut journal subscriptions for 1989. Painfully, some 250 titles were excised. The same conditions in the serials arena still exist: must the library cut more, and thereby face

a potential erosion of collection quality, or should it stretch its budget somehow to match the demands of publishers? And if the latter obtains, how long can the endowment income hold up to 20 percent jumps in the acquisitions budget each year?

Item: The library has never received, or even asked for, grant money or other financial assistance. As a privately endowed institution, it has had the means to maintain its independence and to set its own course.

Will this unique and enviable position hold in the 1990s? Naturally, as a member of the Association of Research Libraries, the independent Research Libraries Association, SLA, ALA, and so forth, the library has been in tune with the trends and problems of the library community. However, to make closer ties with its users, it recently held a Users Forum of scientists, librarians, and other researchers in the Kansas City region. It is hoped that this group can help guide the library in making sound decisions on its collection policy, at a time when review of all policies is necessary.

Other forms of advisory councils and auxiliary groups who would add professional perspective are being considered as well. Outreach of this type, while not eroding the library's independence, will help in defining and dealing with the questions Linda Hall faces.

Item: Automation is coming. A private 1989 study named automation as Linda Hall Library's most pressing need. No collection of the first rank can afford less than optimum access to that collection. Thus the library has created the position of Librarian for Automated Systems and intends to fill the post--one that will likely change every job in the library--by the end of the year.

These are just a few of the issues that

the library is now facing. Others loom: preserving what is primarily a print collection, enlarging its role as an educational and cultural institution, maintaining its physical plant and grounds, and, of course, handling myriad financial and budgetary matters.

Although the library's financial position is still stable, and its ability to build and offer its collections is still high, Linda Hall Library must now take all steps necessary to deal with the problems of the 1990s to ensure that this remains true. The framework is in place, and the administration and staff are confident, even excited, at the prospect that a new era has begun for Linda Hall Library.

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#### LINDA HALL LIBRARY

Address: 5109 Cherry Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64110

Phone: 816/363-4600 (ext. 52) for ILL; exts. 37, 29 for Reference); 816/363-5020 for administration

Hours:

Monday:9:00 a.m.-8:30 p.m.; Tuesday-Friday:9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Saturday:10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Closed Sunday.

Paul Peterson is the Assistant to the Director at Linda Hall Library. A native of Chicago, he received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Russian Language and Literature and a Master of Arts in Library Science from the University of Missouri - Columbia. He has been a member of SLA's Science and Technology Division since 1985, and was Chair of the Publishing Division in 1988-89. He has been with Linda Hall Library since 1977.

#### LOOKING BACKWARD

Ellis Mount

It is conventional to assume that all conditions in our libraries have changed drastically during the past 25 years, but a perusal of the Summer 1965 issue of Sci-Tech News will show that attitudes and practices have changed little in regard to two aspects of sci-tech libraries, namely the use of microfilm and translations.

The issue carried results of two surveys dealing with these materials. The microfilm study showed that most sci-tech library users disliked using microfilm, but practically all librarians felt compelled by space limitations to rely on microfilm, regardless of user attitudes. Even library users, however, had to admit that microfilm was better than nothing. No doubt modern microfilm readers are a great improvement over those in use at the time of the survey, but I have yet to find a person who prefers reading microfilm to the original size document.

The translation survey found that, not unlike today, a few libraries had their own staff translators, a few shared translators with other departments, and the rest had to borrow or pay for translations. All recognized the value of translations, but methods of obtaining them varied greatly from one organization to another.

So it seems little has changed in these areas, no matter how much our other operations and equipment have been transformed since then.